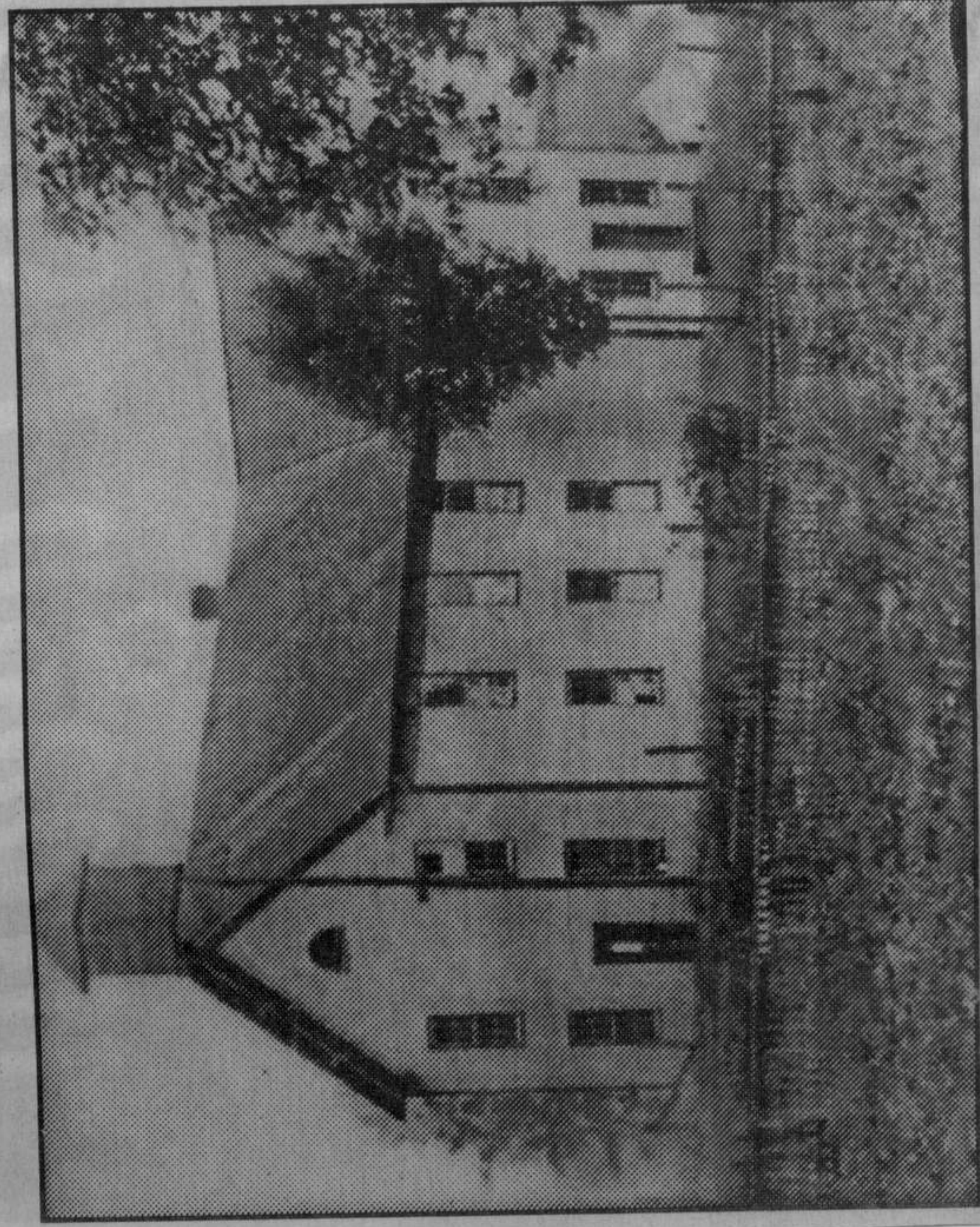


## HISTORIC NOTES

# Education an important part of Hillsboro history



Academy — Known as the Brick Academy, the famous school was housed in a brick building until the 1882 when it was replaced by this larger frame building located where Rt. 219 and the Denmar road intersect in Hillsboro.

Hillsboro High School came into existence in March, 1911, when the Board of Education of Little Levels District in a regular meeting passed an order establishing a district high school at Academy (now Hillsboro). At this same meeting, steps were taken for the holding of a district election to authorize a special levy of twenty cents on the hundred dollars' valuation for the purpose of purchasing suitable grounds and erecting a modern brick building. In this special election, held May 20, 1911, the citizens of Little Levels District decided by a large majority in favor of the levy. Much of the credit for the passage of the levy was given to the efforts of Dr. H. W. McNeel and M. L. Beard, who were members of the Board.

By the opening of school in September, 1912, a splendid new building stood complete and ready for occupancy by both grade and high school students. The first principal of the new high school was Chafe Wilson. In the first graduating class, 1913, were Bertha Overholt and Charles Smith. The class of 1914 also had only two graduates, Dakota Kirk and Henry Beard.

The history of secondary education in the community, however, goes back much farther than the building described above. (In 1842 the State of Virginia chartered three preparatory schools to the University of Virginia—Hillsboro, Huntersville and Green Bank—and Hillsboro was the first, with a school already started.) A one-room brick building, with wings called the "Academy,"

was erected. To this school went many of the ancestors of the people now living in and around Hillsboro. This building was used until the early "eighties" (1882). Then it was deemed inadequate to meet the needs of the school. A larger frame building was erected on the corner of the two main streets. The teachers at the Academy were among the most learned and cultured persons of the times, and included relatives of Pearl S. Buck.

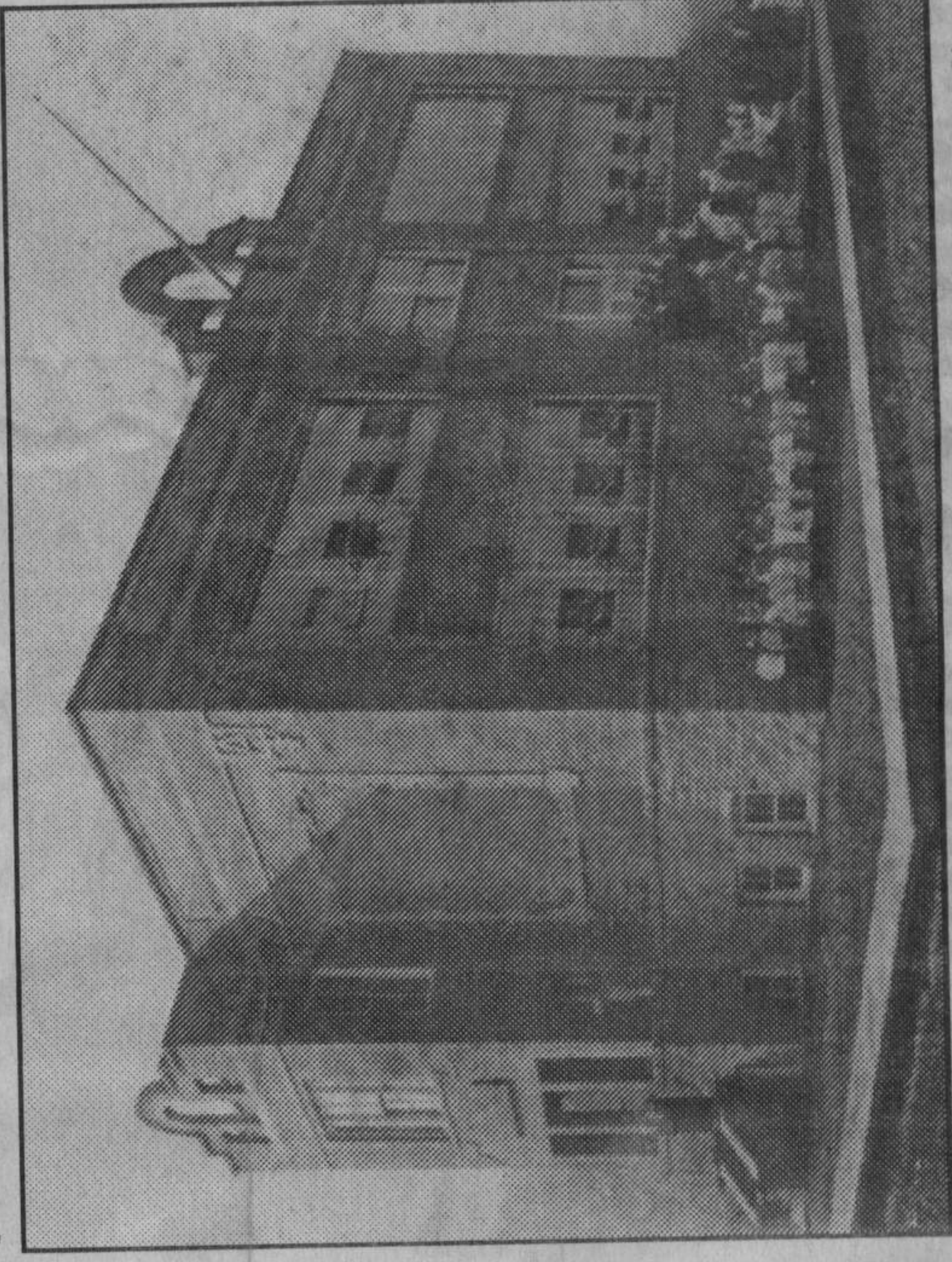
Hillsboro High School continued to grow after 1912 and increased beyond expectations. After viewing the crowded conditions, the Board of Education purchased adjacent land and erected a

new grade school building in 1922 consisting of eight large classrooms and a four hundred fifty seat auditorium. The students of the elementary school and the high school were separated with the first eight grades occupying the new grade building....

The Hillsboro Band was organized in 1953.....  
From 1970 Red Devil Year Book

Floyd T. Jones, in a short history of the school written in 1925, lists the principals and teachers to that date:

1911-Chafe Wilson, Pr., A. E. Riger  
1911-12—Chafe Wilson, Pr.,



Hillsboro High School — The first four-year public high school in Pocahontas County. Built in 1911-1912, it cost about \$15,000. After consolidation of the county high schools in 1970, this building was used for the Hillsboro Middle School. It was torn down in 1988.



it left its impression on the educational interests of this section of the State."

#### Hillsboro High School

The following information was furnished us by the American History Class of Hillsboro High School:

Hillsboro High School plays a part in the early history of the community. In 1834 Mr. Poage, then living in a log house standing on what is now Mr. H. W. Harper's farm, gave a plot of ground located in the little settlement of Hillsboro, for the purpose of building a school house. "The Academy" then erected was a stone structure, and stood on what is now the property of Mr. A. C. Stillwell. It is generally thought that this school received state aid, although this cannot be verified.

This building was used until the early eighties, when because of the large number of outside students coming in, a larger building was needed. The new frame building was built on the corner of the two main streets, where the new bank building now stands.

This building was used until 1911, when conditions again became too crowded and the board of education faced a new building proposition. The present site was purchased from the late Mr. James K. Bright, and a large brick building was built to be used by both high and grade schools. This building was thought to be large enough to satisfy the needs of the community for many years.

The growth of the school was so great within the next ten years, however, and the school became so crowded that, in 1921-22 it was definitely decided that some improvement must be made. Accordingly, plans were made and in 1924 a new graded school building was completed, which will greatly facilitate the progress of education in Hillsboro. It has a large auditorium and several large rooms, and the general plan is up to date and approved.

The school feels the need now of a gymnasium, and all schools do that are without one. The "gym" is an important factor in the life of any school and the students of Hillsboro High school are looking forward to help from the community and district in obtaining one.

#### Rural Schools, Little Levels District Sunrise School

The Sunrise School, located on

#### RURAL SCHOOLS OF GREENBANK DISTRICT

##### HOSTERMAN SCHOOL

The old "Moore" School, one and one-half miles from Hosterman, was built in 1875 and was one of the first schools in Greenbank District. Oscar Sharp, as far as we know, was the first teacher, Robert Sutton and Amos Gillispie were two of the early teachers.

About 1905 a new building was erected near the postoffice at Hosterman. Alice Clark was the first teacher. Then in 1916 another building was erected about a mile from Hosterman to accommodate the Back Mountain settlement. As many as 53 pupils have been enrolled in these schools in recent years. Some of the teachers who have taught in these schools are: Lee Wooddell, Miss Emma Burner, Marie Gelger Burner, Bessie Workman, Miss Welford, W. R. Sutton, Estes Crist and Warren McLaughlin.

##### CONCLUSION

In over a century and a half Pocahontas education has developed from the crudest pioneer schools taught in log cabins, sometimes by teachers who could little more than write, to our present modern schools. They give a striking contrast.

In the middle eighties there were few teachers. The salaries paid them generally twenty five dollars a month for a No. 1 certificate, twenty-two or twenty-three dollars for a No. 2, and between eighteen and twenty dollars for a No. 3. At first the teachers, to quote a local phrase, "boarded around" with the families in the neighborhood and saved the expense of board. Making allowance for low prices it is no wonder that a profession which paid little more than a livelihood and would never pay for an education attracted so few educated people. But in spite of the hardships of the pioneer teacher, there were educated men and women who spent their lives teaching for the sake of education; or ministers who preached on Sunday and taught school during the week.

If a would-be teacher could prove his ability to read, write and solve simple arithmetic he was considered competent.

From a school of probably six



June 13 1975

scribed as quiet and mild mannered, so terrified that he carried a pistol and slept with his lights on? Was witchcraft somehow involved in the slaying and did members of small "hippie" communes that have sprung up near the state park played any role in the case?

**POLICE ARE GIVING** the greatest priority to locating Hauer, or his body, and to learn the whereabouts of Ellen Snyder of Harrisburg, Pa., his girl friend.

Miss Snyder and Hauer had had a relationship for some time and she frequently visited him. She was at his house last week and the couple reportedly broke up.

Police are trying to find her, both at her home and in Morgantown. They don't think she had anything to do with Smith's death but they are concerned about her safety.

Police aren't sure whether Miss Snyder and Smith knew each other. There is some indication that they did since both were students at the university.

In addition, Hauer worked last summer at Watoga as did Smith. Further, Smith often visited in the area of Hauer's home.

A conservation officer, R.S. Morris, who was one of the first searchers for Smith, said he contacted Hauer last week but Hauer told him that he knew nothing of the missing student.

Police did not say what lead them to Hauer's home Monday. But they went there and found the typewritten statement which eventually led to the discovery of Smith's body.

\* \* \*

**SMITH HAD BEEN SHOT** twice in the head with a small caliber pistol. Pocahontas County Pros. Atty. Eugene Simmons said he was hit at close range. The body was sent to West Virginia University for an autopsy. No estimate of the time of death was made.

Hauer moved here about three years ago from Pennsylvania. His consuming interest was in the caves that honeycomb the region. Reportedly, he was writing a book about them.

Ed Sweptston of Lewisburg, who lead the cave exploring team that located the body, described Hauer as quiet, mild mannered and scholarly. Hauer was a fellow member of the Greenbrier Grotto, a division of the National Speleological (cave explorers) Society.

Some time in the past — nobody seemed to know exactly when or exactly why — Hauer began having difficulty with a neighbor.

Later, a horse owned by Hauer was found beaten to death. Acquaintances said Hauer became extremely frightened. He began sleeping with his lights on and he carried a pistol wherever he went.

Otherwise, his life style appeared to have remained unchanged. He farmed, did leatherwork, raised chickens, canned food, explored caves and wrote.

The old-fashioned farmhouse in which he lived is filled with books and magazines. It contained more than 100 copies of National Geographic. Many of them lay atop a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. A large drawing of a cave is tacked above his bed. A chart in the kitchen shows the vitamin content of organic food. A bumper sticker reads "Love Animals Don't Eat Them." Two cats prowl about the house.

\* \* \*

**HAUER WAS** regarded by some of those who knew him as a kind of "hippie." He wore his brown hair long and he had a beard.

Within the last few years, several small communes of young people have sprung up near Watoga State Park. There may be as many as a dozen of them, containing a few people each.

Smith's father, William Smith, who was at the scene, said at one point that he believed his son's disappearance was somehow linked to residents of the commune. Police said they found no evidence of such a link.

On at least two occasions during the search, members of some of the communes said they had visions of where Smith's body would be discovered. One was a black man who said he saw the body in a cave with water flowing out of the cave. There was a stream emerging from the cave in which the body was discovered. Another commune member, a young woman who described herself as a witch, said she had a vision in which Smith was murdered.

Although police discounted the stories, they did investi-

gate others told by longtime residents of the area who said that ritual bonfires, which they thought were somehow involved in witchcraft, had been seen burning during the past weeks.

A group of 28 people from Follansbee came to the area Thursday to aid in the search. Their last sweep was an unsuccessful attempt to find evidence of the bonfires.

Although Smith left Watoga on a Wednesday, a serious search was not started until the following Friday.

People who worked with him said he often took long bicycle trips. They described him as cooperative and friendly but very closemouthed, "almost noncommunicative," one said.

His body, when it was found, was partially covered by rocks.

His bicycle has not been found. Hauer owned a car and a truck. Police said they had located both. Hauer was last seen Monday.



**DESCRIBING** how he found the body of the murder victim is Ed Sweptston, a spelunker from Lewisburg.



June, 13 1975

43

scribed as quiet and mild mannered, so terrified that he carried a pistol and slept with his lights on? Was witchcraft somehow involved in the slaying and did members of small "hippie" communes that have sprung up near the state park played any role in the case?

**POLICE ARE GIVING** the greatest priority to locating Hauer, or his body, and to learn the whereabouts of Ellen Snyder of Harrisburg, Pa., his girl friend.

Miss Snyder and Hauer had had a relationship for some time and she frequently visited him. She was at his house last week and the couple reportedly broke up.

Police are trying to find her, both at her home and in Morgantown. They don't think she had anything to do with Smith's death but they are concerned about her safety.

Police aren't sure whether Miss Snyder and Smith knew each other. There is some indication that they did since both were students at the university.

In addition, Hauer worked last summer at Watoga as did Smith. Further, Smith often visited in the area of Hauer's home.

A conservation officer, R.S. Morris, who was one of the first searchers for Smith, said he contacted Hauer last week but Hauer told him that he knew nothing of the missing student.

Police did not say what lead them to Hauer's home Monday. But they went there and found the typewritten statement which eventually led to the discovery of Smith's body.

\*\*\*

**SMITH HAD BEEN SHOT** twice in the head with a small caliber pistol. Pocahontas County Pros. Atty. Eugene Simmons said he was hit at close range. The body was sent to West Virginia University for an autopsy. No estimate of the time of death was made.

Hauer moved here about three years ago from Pennsylvania. His consuming interest was in the caves that honeycomb the region. Reportedly, he was writing a book about them.

Ed Sweptston of Lewisburg, who lead the cave exploring team that located the body, described Hauer as quiet, mild mannered and scholarly. Hauer was a fellow member of the Greenbrier Grotto, a division of the National Speleological (cave explorers) Society.

Some time in the past — nobody seemed to know exactly when or exactly why — Hauer began having difficulty with a neighbor.

Later, a horse owned by Hauer was found beaten to death. Acquaintances said Hauer became extremely frightened. He began sleeping with his lights on and he carried a pistol wherever he went.

Otherwise, his life style appeared to have remained unchanged. He farmed, did leatherwork, raised chickens, canned food, explored caves and wrote.

The old-fashioned farmhouse in which he lived is filled with books and magazines. It contained more than 100 copies of National Geographic. Many of them lay atop a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. A large drawing of a cave is tacked above his bed. A chart in the kitchen shows the vitamin content of organic food. A bumper sticker reads "Love Animals Don't Eat Them." Two cats prowl about the house.

\*\*\*

**HAUER WAS** regarded by some of those who knew him as a kind of "hippie." He wore his brown hair long and he had a beard.

Within the last few years, several small communes of young people have sprung up near Watoga State Park. There may be as many as a dozen of them, containing a few people each.

Smith's father, William Smith, who was at the scene, said at one point that he believed his son's disappearance was somehow linked to residents of the commune. Police said they found no evidence of such a link.

On at least two occasions during the search, members of some of the communes said they had visions of where Smith's body would be discovered. One was a black man who said he saw the body in a cave with water flowing out of the cave. There was a stream emerging from the cave in which the body was discovered. Another commune member, a young woman who described herself as a witch, said she had a vision in which Smith was murdered.

**Although police discounted the stories, they did investi-**

**gate others told by longtime residents of the area who said that ritual bonfires, which they thought were somehow involved in witchcraft, had been seen burning during the past weeks.**

A group of 28 people from Follansbee came to the area Thursday to aid in the search. Their last sweep was an unsuccessful attempt to find evidence of the bonfires.

Although Smith left Watoga on a Wednesday, a serious search was not started until the following Friday.

People who worked with him said he often took long bicycle trips. They described him as cooperative and friendly but very closemouthed, "almost noncommunicative," one said.

His body, when it was found, was partially covered by rocks.

His bicycle has not been found. Hauer owned a car and a truck. Police said they had located both. Hauer was last seen Monday.

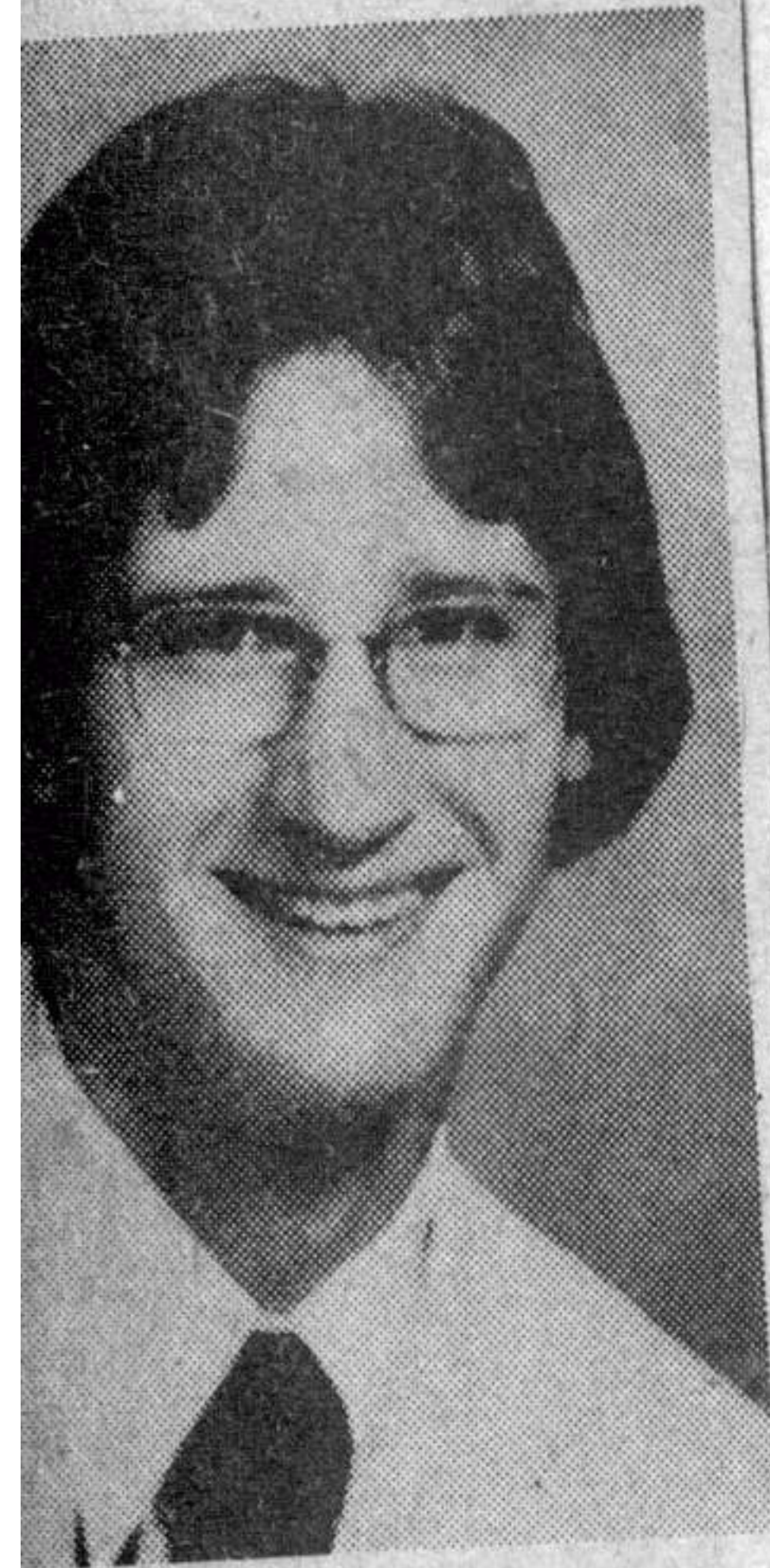


**DESCRIBING** how he found the body of the murder victim is Ed Sweptston, a spelunker from Lewisburg.



# red Student in Cave gh a 'Will'

June 13 1975



Walter Smith

LSBORO — A cave explorer whose will and testament" lead to the discovery of the body of a missing West Virginia University student is the chief suspect in the murder.

Police Cpl. W.R. Dyer said a typewritten document found in a house occupied by Peter Hauer, about 30, indicated Hauer had fatally shot Walter Smith, Follansbee.

Smith's body was found at about 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, some 200 yards inside a cave behind Hauer's house.

Dyer did not give details but he said that information in the document — which he described as Hauer's last will and testament — lead searchers to the body.

**HE SAID THE DOCUMENT** indicated that Hauer may have committed suicide. Search teams which had been looking for Smith are now trying to find Hauer or his body.

Smith, the son of a Weirton Steel Co. executive, had been missing since June 4. He was employed for the summer as a recreation attendant at nearby Watoga State Park.

He told fellow workers that he planned to ride his 10-speed bicycle to Hillsboro. Hauer's home is about five miles west of Hillsboro near the Pocahontas County town of Lobelia.

Discovery of the body ended the main mystery but it left many questions unanswered.

Among them is what has happened to Hauer and his girl friend, a West Virginia University student? Why was Hauer, de-

scribed as quiet and mild mannered, so terrified that he carried a pistol and slept with his lights on? Was witchcraft somehow involved in the slaying and did members of small "hippie" communes that have sprung up near the state park played any role in the case?

**POLICE ARE GIVING** the greatest priority to locating Hauer, or his body, and to learn the whereabouts of Ellen Snyder of Harrisburg, Pa., his girl friend.

Miss Snyder and Hauer had had a relationship for some time and she frequently visited him. She was at his house last week and the couple reportedly broke up.

Police are trying to find her, both at her home and in Morgantown. They don't think she had anything to do with Smith's death but they are concerned about her safety.

Police aren't sure whether Miss Snyder and Smith knew each other. There is some indication that they did since both were students at the university.

In addition, Hauer worked last summer at Watoga as did Smith. Further, Smith often visited in the area of Hauer's home.

A conservation officer, R.S. Morris, who was one of the first searchers for Smith, said he contacted Hauer last week but Hauer told him that he knew nothing of the missing student.

Police did not say what lead them to Hauer's home Monday. But they went there and found the typewritten statement which eventually led to the discovery of Smith's body.

\*\*\*

**SMITH HAD BEEN SHOT** twice in the head with a small caliber pistol. Pocahontas County Pros. Atty. Eugene Simmons said he was hit at close range. The body was sent to West Virginia University for an autopsy. No estimate of the time of death was made.

Hauer moved here about three years ago from Pennsylvania. His consuming interest was in the caves that honeycomb the region. Reportedly, he was writing a book about them.

Ed Sweptston of Lewisburg, who lead the cave exploring team that located the body, described Hauer as quiet, mild mannered and scholarly. Hauer was a fellow member of the Greenbrier Grotto, a division of the National Speleological (cave explorers) Society.

Some time in the past — nobody seemed to know exactly when or exactly why — Hauer began having difficulty with a neighbor.

Later, a horse owned by Hauer was found beaten to death. Acquaintances said Hauer became extremely frightened. He began sleeping with his lights on and he carried a pistol wherever he went.

Otherwise, his life style appeared to have remained unchanged. He farmed, did leatherwork, raised chickens, canned food, explored caves and wrote.

The old-fashioned farmhouse in which he lived is filled with books and magazines. It contained more than 100 copies of National Geographic. Many of them lay atop a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. A large drawing of a cave is tacked above his bed. A chart in the kitchen shows the vitamin content of organic food. A bumper sticker reads "Love Animals Don't Eat Them." Two cats prowl about the house.

\*\*\*

**HAUER WAS** regarded by some of those who knew him as a kind of "hippie." He wore his brown hair long and he had a beard.

Within the last few years, several small communes of young people have sprung up near Watoga State Park. There may be as many as a dozen of them, containing a few people each.

Smith's father, William Smith, who was at the scene, said at one point that he believed his son's disappearance was somehow linked to residents of the commune. Police said they found no evidence of such a link.

On at least two occasions during the search, members of some of the communes said they had visions of where Smith's body would be discovered. One was a black man who said he saw the body in a cave with water flowing out of the cave. There was a stream emerging from the cave in which the body was discovered. Another commune member, a young woman who described herself as a witch, said she had a vision in which Smith was murdered.

**Although police discounted the stories, they did investi-**

**gate others told by longtime residents of the area who said that ritual bonfires, which they thought were somehow involved in witchcraft, had been seen burning during the past weeks.**

A group of 28 people from Follansbee came to the area Thursday to aid in the search. Their last sweep was an unsuccessful attempt to find evidence of the bonfires.

Although Smith left Watoga on a Wednesday, a serious search was not started until the following Friday.

People who worked with him said he often took long bicycle trips. They described him as cooperative and friendly but very closemouthed, "almost noncommunicative," one said.

His body, when it was found, was partially covered by rocks.

His bicycle has not been found. Hauer owned a car and a truck. Police said they had located both. Hauer was last seen Monday.

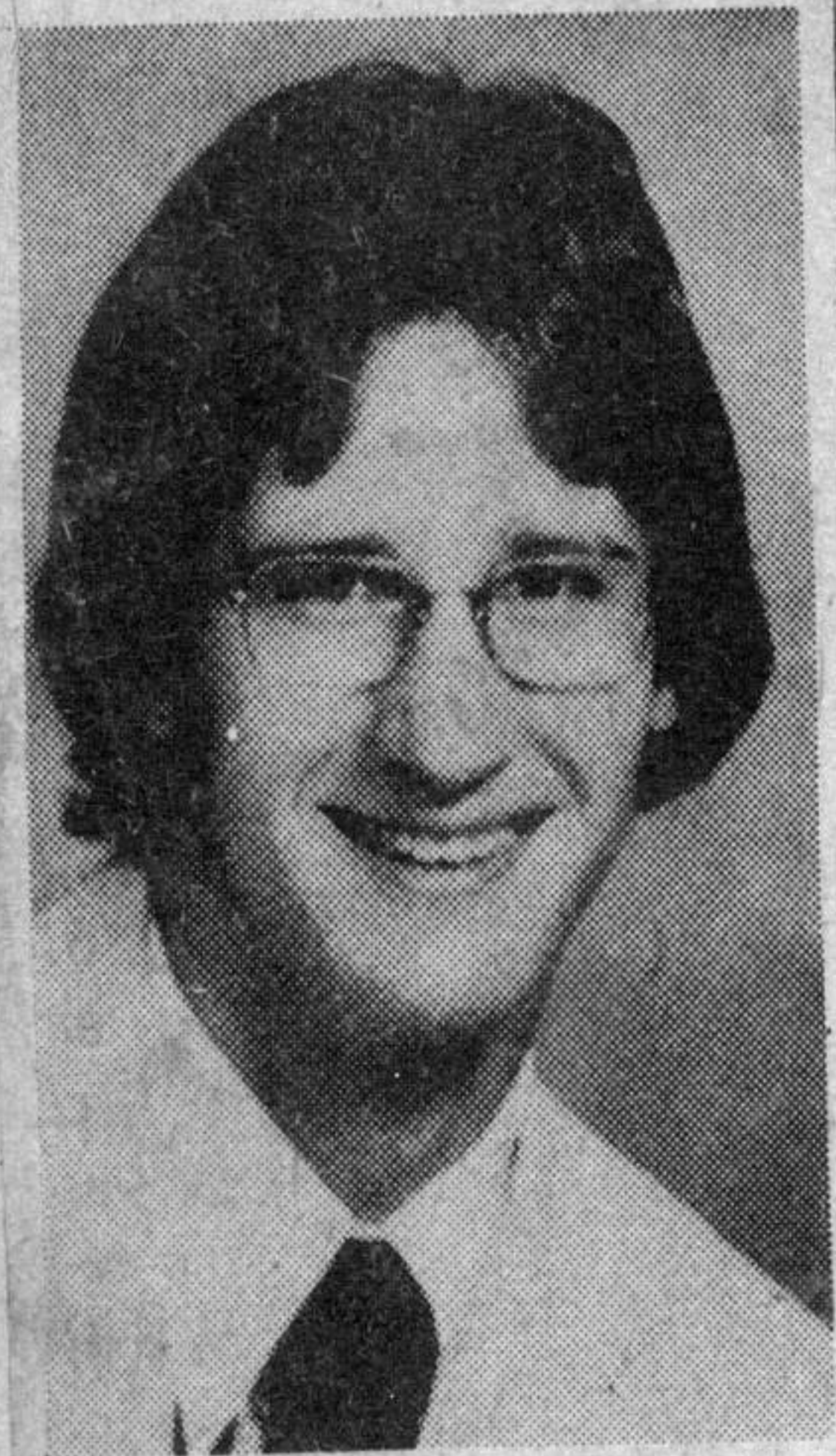


**DESCRIBING** how he found the body of the murder victim Sweptston, a spelunker Lewisburg.



# Murdered Student Found in Cave Through a 'Will'

June, 13 1975



Walter Smith

HILLSBORO — A cave explorer whose "last will and testament" lead to the discovery of the body of a missing West Virginia University student is the chief suspect in the murder.

State Police Cpl. W.R. Dyer said a typewritten document found in a house occupied by Peter Hauer, about 30, indicated that Hauer had fatally shot Walter Smith, 18, of Follansbee.

Smith's body was found at about 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, some 200 yards inside a cave behind Hauer's house.

Dyer did not give details but he said that information in the document — which he described as Hauer's last will and testament — lead searchers to the body.

**DYER SAID THE DOCUMENT** indicated that Hauer may have committed suicide. Search teams which had been looking for Smith are now trying to find Hauer or his body.

Smith, the son of a Weirton Steel Co. executive, had been missing since June 4. He was employed for the summer as a recreation attendant at nearby Watoga State Park.

He told fellow workers that he planned to ride his 10-speed bicycle to Hillsboro. Hauer's home is about five miles west of Hillsboro near the Pocahontas County hamlet of Lobelia.

Discovery of the body ended the main mystery but it left many questions unanswered.

Among them is what has happened to Hauer and his girl friend, a West Virginia University student? Why was Hauer, de-

scribed as quiet and mild mannered, so terrified that he carried a pistol and slept with his lights on? Was witchcraft somehow involved in the slaying and did members of small "hippie" communes that have sprung up near the state park played any role in the case?

**POLICE ARE GIVING** the greatest priority to locating Hauer, or his body, and to learn the whereabouts of Ellen Snyder of Harrisburg, Pa., his girl friend.

Miss Snyder and Hauer had had a relationship for some time and she frequently visited him. She was at his house last week and the couple reportedly broke up.

Police are trying to find her, both at her home and in Morgantown. They don't think she had anything to do with Smith's death but they are concerned about her safety.

Police aren't sure whether Miss Snyder and Smith knew each other. There is some indication that they did since both were students at the university.

In addition, Hauer worked last summer at Watoga as did Smith. Further, Smith often visited in the area of Hauer's home.

A conservation officer, R.S. Morris, who was one of the first searchers for Smith, said he contacted Hauer last week but Hauer told him that he knew nothing of the missing student.

Police did not say what lead them to Hauer's home Monday. But they went there and found the typewritten statement which eventually led to the discovery of Smith's body.

\*\*\*

**SMITH HAD BEEN SHOT** twice in the head with a small caliber pistol. Pocahontas County Pros. Atty. Eugene Simmons said he was hit at close range. The body was sent to West Virginia University for an autopsy. No estimate of the time of death was made.

Hauer moved here about three years ago from Pennsylvania. His consuming interest was in the caves that honeycomb the region. Reportedly, he was writing a book about them.

Ed Sweptston of Lewisburg, who lead the cave exploring team that located the body, described Hauer as quiet, mild mannered and scholarly. Hauer was a fellow member of the Greenbrier Grotto, a division of the National Speleological (cave explorers) Society.

Some time in the past — nobody seemed to know exactly when or exactly why — Hauer began having difficulty with a neighbor.

Later, a horse owned by Hauer was found beaten to death. Acquaintances said Hauer became extremely frightened. He began sleeping with his lights on and he carried a pistol wherever he went.

Otherwise, his life style appeared to have remained unchanged. He farmed, did leatherwork, raised chickens, canned food, explored caves and wrote.

The old-fashioned farmhouse in which he lived is filled with books and magazines. It contained more than 100 copies of National Geographic. Many of them lay atop a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. A large drawing of a cave is tacked above his bed. A chart in the kitchen shows the vitamin content of organic food. A bumper sticker reads "Love Animals Don't Eat Them." Two cats prowl about the house.

\*\*\*

**HAUER WAS** regarded by some of those who knew him as a kind of "hippie." He wore his brown hair long and he had a beard.

Within the last few years, several small communes of young people have sprung up near Watoga State Park. There may be as many as a dozen of them, containing a few people each.

Smith's father, William Smith, who was at the scene, said at one point that he believed his son's disappearance was somehow linked to residents of the commune. Police said they found no evidence of such a link.

On at least two occasions during the search, members of some of the communes said they had visions of where Smith's body would be discovered. One was a black man who said he saw the body in a cave with water flowing out of the cave. There was a stream emerging from the cave in which the body was discovered. Another commune member, a young woman who described herself as a witch, said she had a vision in which Smith was murdered.

**Although police discounted the stories, they did investi-**

**gate others told by longtime residents of the area who said that ritual bonfires, which they thought were somehow involved in witchcraft, had been seen burning during the past weeks.**

A group of 28 people from Follansbee came to the area Thursday to aid in the search. Their last sweep was an unsuccessful attempt to find evidence of the bonfires.

Although Smith left Watoga on a Wednesday, a serious search was not started until the following Friday.

People who worked with him said he often took long bicycle trips. They described him as cooperative and friendly but very closemouthed, "almost noncommunicative,"

His body, w  
was partial  
rocks.

His bicycl  
found. Hauer  
a truck. Polic  
located both.  
seen Monday.

**DESCRIBI**  
body of the  
Sweepston,  
Lewisburg.



June, 13 1975

quiet and mild mannered, so that he carried a pistol and slept with his lights on? Was witchcraft somehow involved in the slaying and did members of small "hippie" communes that sprung up near the state park played a part in the case?

**THEY ARE GIVING** the greatest effort to locating Hauer, or his body, and to determining the whereabouts of Ellen Snyder of Lewisburg, Pa., his girl friend.

Snyder and Hauer had had a relationship for some time and she frequently visited him. She was at his house last week when the couple reportedly broke up.

Police are trying to find her, both at her home and in Morgantown. They don't know if she had anything to do with Smith's disappearance, but they are concerned about her.

Police aren't sure whether Miss Snyder and Smith knew each other. There is some question about that they did since both were students at the university.

Smith, Hauer worked last summer in Morgantown as did Smith. Further, Smith of Morgantown lived in the area of Hauer's home.

Investigation officer, R.S. Morris, who was one of the first searchers for Smith, contacted Hauer last week but Hauer told him that he knew nothing of the student.

Police did not say what lead them to Hauer's home Monday. But they went to Hauer's home and found the typewritten statement which eventually led to the discovery of the body.

\*\*\*

**HAD BEEN SHOT** twice in the chest with a small caliber pistol. Pocahontas County Pros. Atty. Eugene Simmons said Hauer was hit at close range. The body was taken to West Virginia University for autopsy. No estimate of the time of death was made.

Hauer moved here about three years ago from Pennsylvania. His consuming interest was in the caves that honeycomb the area. Reportedly, he was writing a book about them.

Later, a horse owned by Hauer was found beaten to death. Acquaintances said Hauer became extremely frightened. He began sleeping with his lights on and he carried a pistol wherever he went.

Otherwise, his life style appeared to have remained unchanged. He farmed, did leatherwork, raised chickens, canned food, explored caves and wrote.

The old-fashioned farmhouse in which he lived is filled with books and magazines. It contained more than 100 copies of National Geographic. Many of them lay atop a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. A large drawing of a cave is tacked above his bed. A chart in the kitchen shows the vitamin content of organic food. A bumper sticker reads "Love Animals Don't Eat Them." Two cats prowl about the house.

\*\*\*

**HAUER WAS** regarded by some of those who knew him as a kind of "hippie." He wore his brown hair long and he had a beard.

Within the last few years, several small communes of young people have sprung up near Watoga State Park. There may be as many as a dozen of them, containing a few people each.

Smith's father, William Smith, who was at the scene, said at one point that he believed his son's disappearance was somehow linked to residents of the commune. Police said they found no evidence of such a link.

On at least two occasions during the search, members of some of the communes said they had visions of where Smith's body would be discovered. One was a black man who said he saw the body in a cave with water flowing out of the cave. There was a stream emerging from the cave in which the body was discovered. Another commune member, a young woman who described herself as a witch, said she had a vision in which Smith was murdered.

Although police discounted the stories, they did investi-

gate others told by longtime residents of the area who said that ritual bonfires, which they thought were somehow involved in witchcraft, had been seen burning during the past weeks.

A group of 28 people from

His body, when it was found, was partially covered by rocks.

His bicycle has not been found. Hauer owned a car and a truck. Police said they had located both. Hauer was last seen Monday.

43



**DESCRIBING** how he found the body of the murder victim is Ed Swepston, a spelunker from Lewisburg.



# ence Indicates Ritual

## in Murder

ew Gallagher  
ff Writer

**MEANWHILE, STATE POLICE** said Ellen Snyder, Hauer's missing girl friend, has been located in Pittsburgh, Pa., and was returning to the Hillsboro area late Friday night. Police say she is not under suspicion.

Painter said Smith's body when discovered was nude with the exception of some plastic that had been wrapped around it. A piece of blanket was wrapped around the top of the head.

Spots of blood were found about the cave but it has not been determined where Smith was killed.

State Police Cpl. W. R. Dyer, who is inclined to downgrade any connection of witchcraft with the murder, said he is investigating a possibility that Smith had fallen in with some cult in the surrounding area.

Smith was acquainted with a woman from New Jersey who claimed to be witch, state police said. The woman and her husband and three children were Lobelia on Monday and left early Friday.

Painter said a search of Smith's belongings uncovered correspondence between Smith and the New Jersey woman. The woman reportedly came to West Virginia to try to buy some property, but left when the deal didn't go through.

**HAUER REPORTEDLY** was terrified by several groups living in hippie-type communes round the area.

He apparently began carrying a pistol some time ago after his horse was beaten to death and four of his goats were disembowled.

Police quoted a neighbor of Hauer's that there was some kind of ritual nearby at 12:45 a.m. Monday at the rising of a new moon.

Neighbors last saw Hauer shortly before noon the same day as he quietly worked in his garden.

Those who knew Hauer best continue to insist he would be incapable of such violence as indicated by Smith's death.

Sgt. Painter quoted neighbors that Hauer was so meek he would seek the help of others to dispose of wounded animals.

Cpl. Dyer said about 30 National Guardsmen, 10 conservation officers and a group of spelunkers from Lewisburg are still going over the ground around Hillsboro in search of some clue to Hauer's whereabouts.

The area is dotted with worked out saltpeter caves that Hauer spent much of his time mapping and studying.

By James A. Hill  
Staff Writer

The note left behind by suspected murderer Peter M. Hauer is causing wide speculation about a motive for the slaying of 18-year-old Walter Smith of Follansbee.

Besides disclosing where the body of the West Virginia University student could be found, the note said in part:

"He just came to the wrong place at the wrong time. . . It was my mental condition."

His reference to his mental condition is what is intriguing investigators the most.

According to at least one acquaintance of Hauer's, the native of Lebanon, Pa., is

known to have been a sometime user of LSD.

**IN VIEW OF THIS**, authorities are wondering if Hauer was "tripped out" when Smith was shot three times in the head and neck on or about June 4.

Smith, a summer worker at Watoga State Park, was seen leaving the park on his bicycle that day for a trip to nearby Hillsboro. When he failed to return the following day, a minor search was initiated.

The search intensified as days continued to pass without any trace of Smith. A number of searchers knocked on the door of Hauer's rustic home at nearby Lobelia, but Hauer denied any knowledge of Smith's whereabouts.

On June 11, the search was joined by scores of National Guardsmen, state police reinforcements and a number of spelunkers. They were ordered to pay particular attention to the numberless, worked-out saltpeter caves that pitted the area.

Since it was widely known that Hauer had been making a study of the caves, searchers again knocked on his door. When the knock went unanswered, a member of the party entered the cluttered house. He immediately spotted the note on Hauer's desk.

**AMONG OTHER THINGS**, the note said Smith's body could be found in a cave behind Hauer's house. It also said Hauer intended to kill himself. It did not say where or when.

Reinforcements were called in and ordered to search every cave in the area. Spelunkers, equipped with scuba diving gear, even descended into deep pools of water that covered some of the cave bottoms.

Neighbors, who had grown used to seeing Hauer work his small garden daily beside his weathered home, reported that Hauer was last seen on the morning of June 9, two days before the discovery of the note and five days after Smith disappeared.

The murder warrant issued for Hauer's arrest accuses him of killing Smith by gunfire on or about June 4, the day of the victim's disappearance.

Investigators say it raises an obvious question. If Hauer did kill Smith on June 4, why did he wait until June 9 to write the note before disappearing himself? Had he been under the influence of a drug during the period, suddenly regained his senses and discovered the awful result of a "bad trip"? Was his suicide threat merely a ruse to throw investigators off his trail?

State Police Cpl. Bill Dyer is reluctant to discuss intimate details of the case for fear of prompting erroneous and prejudicial conclusions by the public.

**"THIS IS ONE OF THE** most mystifying cases I have ever had," Dyer says. "I just wish I knew more about this man I'm looking for. At this point, I don't even know whether he's dead or alive."

Dyer says samples of Hauer's writing leads him to believe he is a better than average student of the Civil War.

"Some of this stuff seems brilliant to me," he says.

His girl friend, Kathryn Agnew, a 22-year-old student nurse at Baltimore City Hospital, said Hauer attended Gettysburg College, site of the famous Civil War battle, to further his knowledge of the



Peter M. Hauer leads a nature tour near the

Outdoor and Environmental Education Center at Harrisburg, Pa. Picture was taken in 1972.